

ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
4141 N. Third Street, Phoenix AZ 85012
Thursday – October 9, 2008

M I N U T E S

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 10.00 a.m. by Vice Chairman Yamanouchi.

Present

Advisory Commissioners

Kenneth Yamanouchi
Linda Fulkerson
Gary Fredricks
Thomas Heaney
Phillip Quochoytewa
Larry McKim
Terrie Gent

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Robert Barnes, Deputy Director
Dave Hampton, Public Information Officer
Tom Creager, AZ State Veteran Home
Administrator
Lee Borgen, Veterans' Benefits Counselor

Absent

Bill Lunsford
George Cushing

Opening – Chairman Yamanouchi opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. with appropriate ceremony.

Minutes – The minutes of September 11, 2008 were approved as distributed.
(Moved by Commissioner McKim and seconded by Commissioner Heaney)

Communications – none

Agency Announcements –

Deputy Director Barnes:

- VSD office has been opened in Safford AZ.
- The Governor's Round Table meetings of 10/6/08 and 10/30/08 were well attended. These sessions focus on services to veterans and families with particular attention to those from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).
- The ground breaking ceremony at the Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery, for the special area designated for re-interment of the civil war soldier remains, discovered during the development of the cemetery, was well attended.
- At present it appears that the Department is not at risk for any cuts or reductions due to the budget situation.

Commissioner Fredricks:

- If the budget situation deteriorates further it may be appropriate for the Commission to send a letter to the legislature in support of protecting the Departments status.
- There are new rules for the use of the Veterans' Donation Fund. How will they impact the progress on the Enduring Freedom Memorial?
- It would be beneficial for the Commission to have a report on how Veterans First Limited (VFL) is utilizing their funds. Not an audit, just a general overview on the funds distribution.
- Deputy Director Barnes took these items for action and they will be addressed at the December 2008 meeting.

Administrator Creager

- He verified that the Home's newsletter was received by everyone and received positive feedback for its form and content.
- The VA survey has been completed. Once approved by the VA, referrals from the VA will begin.
- Overall communications with the VA and local area hospitals is much improved and the Home is receiving referrals from some of the local hospitals. He noted that per VA rules the Home only has 24 beds authorized for Medicare residents.
- The current census is 144. That figure reflects residents who are physically present and does not include those currently absent from the Home due to hospitalization.
- The Governor will visit the Home on Veterans' day from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. She will give a very short speech and then play poker with the residents. This is a very popular event with the residents.

Region 4 meeting

- Commissioner Fulkerson reported that everything is on track for the meeting in Kingman on November 15, 2008.
- All veterans' organizations have been contacted and invitation letters are in preparation for civic leaders and legislators.

Review of follow up actions

1. Commissioner McKim provided a revised document that tracks "open issues", "closed issues" and a running list of issues that have been brought to the Commission's attention since July 2007. The number of times an issue is raised is being tracked to determine the level of interest; is it a strictly local matter or of concern in various areas around the state. This document will be a valuable tool for evaluating needs within Arizona's veteran community, thus assisting the Commission in its primary purpose to substantively advise the Department Director and the Governor's office on veteran related matters. Commissioner Fredricks noted that it would be beneficial for "follow up actions" to include things that are resolved at the time as well as after the fact.
2. Deputy Director Barnes
 - He met with AZ Dept. of Transportation (ADOT) concerning the lack of uniformity in giving the vehicle property tax exemption to survivors of 100% service connected veterans. It appears that ADOT had not updated their in-house instructions to comply with the new law. They assured us that corrective action will be taken immediately and thanked us for bringing it to their attention. Mr. Barnes emphasized that this is a good example of the value of town hall meetings and what can be accomplished.
 - The University of Arizona is interested in ways to help veterans. The issue of transfer of credit for credits earned at other community colleges and universities, military schools and life time learning was discussed, but no action was proposed. This will be an ongoing issue that will take time to resolve. It was noted that private educational institutions are much more cooperative on this matter. Commissioner Gent suggested that this may be a topic on which the Commission should advise the Governor.
3. Due to administrative oversight, the June 12, 2008 adoption of the Advisory Commissions' Revised Strategic Plan was not noted in the formal minutes. Today, the June 12th adoption was ratified and approved on motion from Commissioner Fredricks that was seconded by Commissioner McKim.

Public comments – none

Comments for the good of the Commission –

1. There was general discussion on the need to get the younger veterans to attend the regional meetings. It was noted that the electronic medium is their primary means of communications and that we need to find a way to effectively capitalize on this change, in addition to identifying and addressing topics that may be more relevant to them. Suggestions and topics proffered for consideration included:
 - When town hall meetings are planned the local Veterans' Benefits Counselor should be contacted to identify issues of local concern, particularly among our younger veterans and their families. A Commissioner could prepare a very short brief for general information on a selected issue (ten minutes max) for delivery at the beginning of the meeting. The topic could be published on the agenda.
 - stress that town hall meetings are for veterans, their families and survivors in addition to families of deployed personnel
 - the recent change in the new GI bill
 - access to VA medical care
 - access to VA mental health services
2. Commissioner Gent noted that veterans and post-deployment families need a central location that they can e-mail with their specific needs and receive a direct response with pertinent referrals or points of contact to address their specific situation. She also suggested that it may be beneficial (for Commissioners' general knowledge) to have resource entities come to a commission meeting and give a brief overview of their relevant capabilities.
3. Chairman Yamanouchi advised that OEF/OIF casualties have a 91% chance of survival based on the "golden ten minutes" (what used to be thought of as the "golden hour") if competent emergency medical care is received within ten minutes of injury. In response to this change all active duty personnel now receive basic emergency medical training prior to deployment.
4. Commissioner Fredricks gave an overview of the "Arizona Veterans Service Advisory Commission Guidelines" that he developed to operationalize the Advisory Commissions' Strategic Plan. He passed out copies and asked the Commissioners to review it and provide comments at the December meeting.

Adjournment – Chairman Yamanouchi adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m. (Moved by Commissioner Heaney and seconded by Commissioner McKim.) The next meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on November 15, 2008 at VFW Post 10386, 3036 John L Ave, Kingman, Arizona.

Respectfully submitted,

S. Lee Borgen
Secretary